

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as set forth below.

1. (Currently Amended) A binder strip cassette comprising:

a cassette housing;

a multiplicity of elongated binder strips, each of said binder strips including a flexible substrate and an heat-activated adhesive disposed on the substrate, with each binder strip having a leading and a trailing end;

a flexible elongated carrier supporting said binder strips, with said binder strips being disposed along a length of the elongated carrier so that a leading end of one binder strip is positioned next to a trailing end of an adjacent binder strip and with said elongated carrier and said binder strips being wound to form a binder strip roll;

a layer of pressure sensitive adhesive intermediate the binder strip substrates and the carrier, with the layer of pressure sensitive adhesive being disposed along less than a total length of each of the binder strip substrates between the leading and trailing ends;

a mounting mechanism which rotatably mounts the binder strip roll within the cassette housing;

a drive apparatus for unwinding the binder strip roll to provide an unwound portion of the binder strip roll;

a separating apparatus for separating the binder strips from the elongated carrier of the unwound portion of the binder strip roll to produce a separated binder strip, with the unwinding by the drive apparatus causing a binder strip to be at least partially ejected through a binder strip eject opening in the cassette housing with leading end of the binder strips exiting the housing prior to the trailing end; and

a guide mechanism positioned to guide the unwound portion of the binder strip roll to the separating apparatus, with the guide mechanism including a guide member having a movable first portion that engages a wound portion of the binder strip roll as the binder strip roll is depleted.

2. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 1 wherein the separating apparatus includes a separating member which receives the elongated carrier along an input path and outputs the elongated carrier along an output path, with said input path and said output path being disposed at an angle relative to one another such that one of the binder strips on the carrier begins to separate from the carrier when the carrier changes movement from the input to the output path.
3. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 2 wherein the drive apparatus includes a take up roller disposed within the cassette housing, which receives the elongated carrier after the elongated carrier has passed the separating member.
4. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 3 wherein the drive apparatus includes a drive connection to the take up roller so that the take up roller can be rotatably driven by a drive source external to the cassette housing, with the pressure sensitive adhesive being absent from at least 20% of a total length of the binder strip at the trailing end of each of the binder strips.
5. (Presently Cancelled)
6. (Presently Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim [[5]] 1 wherein the guide mechanism further includes an idle roller mounted for rotation within the cassette housing.
7. (Presently Cancelled)
8. (Presently Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim [[7]] 1 wherein the guide member is an elongated guide member having a [[first]] second portion that

engages the unwound portion of the binder strip roll and [[a second]] the first portion that engages [[a]] the wound portion of the binder strip roll.

9. (Presently Cancelled)

10. (Presently Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim [[9]] 8 wherein the first portion of the elongated guide member is captured between the wound portion of the binder strip roll and the unwound portion of the binder strip roll.

11. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 10 wherein the binder strips and elongated carrier are positioned relative to one another on the binder strip roll such that the elongated carrier is positioned on an exterior of said binder strip roll.

12. (Previously Cancelled)

13. (Previously Cancelled)

14. (Previously Cancelled)

15. (Presently Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 10 wherein the elongated guide member is pivotally mounted at a location on the guide member displaced from said first ~~and second guide member portions~~ portion so that said first portion of the elongated guide member can continue to engage the wound portion of the binder strip roll as the binder strip roll is depleted.

16. (Previously Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 1 wherein said elongated carrier includes encoded information regarding the binder strip roll and

wherein the encoded information is readable from a location external to the cassette housing.

18. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 17 where the encoded information is optically encoded information and wherein the cassette housing includes an opening by which the elongated carrier passes so that the encoded information can be read through the opening.

19. (Previously Cancelled)

20. (Previously Cancelled)

21. (Previously Amended) A binder strip cassette comprising:

- a cassette housing;

- a binder strip roll comprising layers of binder strips separated by layers of a flexible elongated carrier, wherein the binder strips of the binder strip roll are not adhered to the elongated carrier;

- a mounting mechanism which rotatably mounts the binder strip roll within the cassette housing;

- a drive apparatus for unwinding the binder strip roll to provide an unwound portion of the binder strip roll;

- a separating apparatus for separating the binder strips from the elongated carrier of the unwound portion of the binder strip roll to produce a separated binder strip, with the unwinding by the drive apparatus causing the separated binder strip to be at least partially ejected through a binder strip eject opening in the cassette housing.

22. (Previously Cancelled)

23. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 21 further including a guide mechanism for guiding the unwound portion of the binder strip roll from the wound portion of the binder strip roll to the separating apparatus, with the guide mechanism including an elongated guide member having a first portion which engages a wound portion of the binder strip roll.

24. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 23 wherein the elongated guide member is movable so that the first portion of the elongated guide member continues to engage the wound portion of the binder strip roll as the binder strip roll is depleted.

25. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 24 wherein the elongated guide member is pivotably mounted at a location displaced from the first portion.

26. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 25 wherein elongated guide member is captured between the wound and unwound portions of the binder strip roll.

27. (Previously Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 26 wherein the elongated carrier and the binder strips are positioned relative to one another on the roll such that the elongated carrier is disposed on an exterior portion of the wound portion of the binder strip roll.

28. (Previously Cancelled)

29. (Previously Amended) A binder strip cassette comprising:

    a cassette housing;

    a binder strip roll comprising layers of binder strips separated by layers of a flexible elongated carrier;

a mounting mechanism which rotatably mounts the binder strip roll within the cassette housing;

a drive apparatus for unwinding the binder strip roll to provide an unwound portion of the binder strip roll;

a take up roller disposed within the cassette housing;

a separating apparatus for separating the binder strips from the elongated carrier of the unwound portion of the binder strip roll to produce a separated binder strip, with the unwinding by the drive apparatus causing the separated binder strip to be at least partially ejected through a binder strip eject opening in the cassette housing and with the elongated carrier of the unwound portion being wound around the take up roller; and

a guide mechanism to assist in guiding the unwound portion of the binder strip roll towards the separating apparatus, said guide mechanism including a guide member which is movable with respect to the cassette housing and which engages a wound portion of binder strip roll as the wound portion of the binder strip roll is depleted.

30. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 29 wherein the drive apparatus includes a connector on the take up roller so that the take up roller can be rotationally driven by a drive source external to the cassette housing.

31. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 30 further including optical encoding disposed on the elongated carrier and wherein the cassette housing includes an opening positioned such that the encoding can be read by a reader external to the housing.

32. (Previously Presented) The binder strip cassette of Claim 31 wherein the housing opening is positioned such that the optical encoding can be read on the elongated carrier as the carrier moves from the separating apparatus to the take up roller.

33. (Presently Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 29 wherein ~~[[the]]~~ a first portion of the guide member is disposed intermediate the wound and unwound portions of the binder strip roll.

34. (Presently Amended) The binder strip cassette of Claim 33 wherein the guide member is pivotably mounted at a location on the guide mechanism displaced from the first portion of the ~~[[elongated]]~~ guide member.

35. (Newly Submitted) A method of feeding binder strips into a binding machine, said method including:

- providing a binder strip roll comprising layers of binder strips separated by layers of a flexible elongated carrier;

- unwinding a portion of the binder strip roll to produce an unwound section which includes at least a leading portion of a binder strip and an unwound portion of the elongated carrier;

- separating the leading portion of the binder strip from the elongated carrier of the unwound section;

- guiding the leading portion of the binder strip into a binder strip input of the binding machine;

- sensing binder strip information based upon indicia present on the elongated carrier; and

- drawing the leading portion and remaining portion of the binder strip into the binding machine.

36. (Newly Submitted) The method of Claim 35 wherein the binder strip information includes information relating to a quantity of binder strips remaining on the binder strip roll.

37. (Newly Submitted) The method of Claim 35 wherein the binder strip information includes information relating to a location of the leading portion of the binder strip.

38. (Newly Submitted) The method of Claim 35 wherein the binder strip roll is disposed in a housing, wherein the elongated carrier separated from the binder strip remains within the housing and wherein the sensing takes place by way of an opening in the housing.

39. (Newly Submitted) The method of Claim 35 wherein the elongated carrier separated from the binder strip is wound around a take-up roll and wherein the unwinding a portion of the binder strip roll is carried out by rotating the take-up roller.

40. (Newly Submitted) The method of Claim 39 wherein the drawing takes place independent of the rotating the take-up roller.

41. (Newly Submitted) The method of Claim 40 wherein the drawing is carrier out by a drive mechanism of the binding machine.